SEPTEMBER, 1971

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VOL. 1 NO. 9

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# NEAR EASTERN NUMISMATICS

## SOME DESIRABLE REFERENCE BOOKS . . .

*by*

*Kenneth M. MacKenzie*

The coinages of the Islamic World have held a special fascination for British scholars and the collecting of coins in this group has grown steadily in recent years, not only in Britain, but in the rest of the world, especially in the United States where their popularity among collectors is evidenced by the inclusion of a variety of types from the earliest times up to the present in the periodical coin-lists issued by dealers.

Scholars interested in this field experience no difficulty in following their main interests in collecting and studying the coins which appeal to them, since they are aware and familiar with the numerous reference works in the histories of the Islamic dynasties, and many have access to the basic works and catalogues which have been published in the last hundred years. The newcomer to the field, with perhaps a smattering of knowledge of the languages or alphabets, but with an intense desire to learn more about the coins is faced with the problem of buying or borrowing good manuals on the subject. The object of this paper is to review those works which are often referred to, and which can still be bought, and is to encourage further, the study of this wide field of numismatics where so much is yet to be discovered, earlier statements examined and new interpretations made.

Compared with ancient numismatics, where the representation of figures has added so much to our knowledge of the institutions, religions and aspects of life in the ancient world, the Muhammaden coins are poor, but the beauty of the Arabic calligraphy from its earliest Kufic form to the polished, elegant Nasta'liq style which found its real home in Iran, is a most rewarding study. There is no private mintage in Islam, the striking of coins is the privilege of the ruler. The inscriptions are true documents for the reconstruction of dynasties where literary sources have been vague or silent. Incidentally, the student who masters the languages and realizes that money is the instrument of economic exchange, should not fall easily into the trap of collecting just for display in exhibitions, in which emphasis is given to matters of size, weight and legend, without due regard to the composition of metals used, so necessary for economic studies. He will want to form his own small library.

Essential to the study of these coins, then, would be a dependable guide to the dynasties, and Stanley Lane-Poole's THE MOHAMMADAN DYNASTIES first published in 1893, and reissued in France in 1925 and again in recent years in the USA, is still extremely useful. It is based upon twenty years' work the author did on Arabic coins in the British Museum. The author found it necessary to search for the correct names and dates in the Arabic historians for the thirteen volumes of the Catalogue of Oriental and Indian Coins which were in preparation at that time. These tables which he compiled, plus the inclusion of brief historical introductions for each chapter, made the manual immediately indispensable for the collector. The reader using his book today must bear in mind that the results of researches by famous scholars have made the work partly out of date, but if he obtains another book published in Edinburgh in 1967 entitled THE ISLAMIC DYNASTIES by Clifford Bosworth, which is on a smaller scale than Lane Poole's, but does make full use of the marked progress in Islamic historical scholarship in recent decades, then his dynastic references will be excellent. For the researcher and advanced collector, the MANUEL DE GENEALOGIE ET DE CHRONOLOGIE POUR L'HISTOIRE DE L'ISLAM by Eduard de Zambauer published in 1927 and reprinted in 1955 is a necessity, as is his later work DIE MUNZPRAGUNGEN DES ISLAMS published in Wiesbaden in 1968.

The British Museum catalogues were published in the years 1875-1890 under the editorship of Reginald Stuart Poole. They form a veritable gold-mine of information, and are complete with illustrations of practically all the types of coins described. There are ten volumes in all, volumes nine and ten being additions to the collection in the period 1876-1888. The others are entitled i. THE COINS OF THE EASTERN KHALEEFEHS, ii. THE COINS OF THE MUHAMMADAN DYNASTIES, iii. THE COINS OF THE TURKUMAN HOUSES OF SELJOOK URTUK, ZENGEE, etc., iv. THE COINAGE OF EGYPT under the Fatimee, Khaleefehs, the Ayoobees and Memlook Sultans, v. THE COINS OF THE MOORS OF AFRICA AND SPAIN, etc., vi. THE COINS OF THE MONGOLS, vii. THE COINAGE OF BUKHARA, viii. THE COINAGE OF THE TURKS. The whole set was scarce and practically impossible for the collector

to find or buy, until a reprint was made by Forni in Italy during the past decade. The British Museum also issued for Persia under Poole's editorship, THE COINS OF SHAHS OF PERSIA, a most useful and desirable work, and more likely to be found than Rabino di Borgomale's COINS, MEDALS AND SEALS OF THE SHAHS OF IRAN 1500-1941, an excellent general work.

Before the Forni reprints of the British Museum catalogues appeared, the Museum decided to institute a new catalogue of Muhammadan Coins and the curator, John Walker, before his untimely death, saw the first of two volumes through the press: i. A CATALOGUE OF THE ARAB-SASSANIAN COINS IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM (1941) and ii. A CATALOGUE OF THE ARAB-BYZANTINE AND POST REFORM UMAIYAD COINS (1956) which replaced the volume one in the old series. These two volumes are by far the best works available in the field and are great works of scholarship. They include large numbers of coins from other cabinets, both public and private, and many of the coins previously unpublished have been included due to the historical importance and rarity of the individual specimens. The set is indispensable for anyone wishing to study the development of Islamic coins.

In France, the Parisian collection has been catalogued by H. Lavoix in his incompleted work: CATALOGUE DES MONNAIES MUSULMANES DE LA BIBLIOTHEQUE NATIONALE 1887-1891: i. Khalifes orientaux, ii. Espagne et Afrique, iii. Egypte et Syria. In Russia, the Leningrad, (Hermitage collections) were dealt with by Alekseik Markov in his INVENTARNII KATALOG MUSULMANSKIKH MONET issued in one volume with two supplements at St. Petersburg, 1896-1904. For Germany (Berlin), a less valuable work was compiled by H. Nutzel, KATALOG DER ORIENTALISCHEN MUNZEN.

The extremely rich and splendid collections in the Istanbul museums were catalogued in a series of volumes from 1894 onwards edited by Edhem Khalil, E. I. Ghalib, Ahmed Tevhid et al., unfortunately for western readers the text is in Turkish with Arabic script, except for the fifth volume which is in French. In addition there is a most valuable catalogue of Ottoman coins in a private collection compiled by its owner Edhem I. Ghalib, in

1890. His coins and those in the Museum collection catalogued by Edhem are most often referred to, in works dealing with Ottoman coinage.

Apart from museum catalogues, another important source of information is Sales catalogues, one of the most famous being the Fonrobert sale in Berlin in 1878, edited by Adolph Weyl, containing over 400 pages with 44 plates. This volume on Oriental coins is quoted often, and was quite a scarce book, but has been reprinted in smaller format, in Germany a few years ago.

In recent years some very important monographs have been published in the oriental field, and many of the publications of the American Numismatic Society are noteworthy in this respect. The include the works of George C. Miles' THE COINAGE OF THE UMAYAYYADES OF SPAIN (1950), THE NUMISMATIC HISTORY OF RAYY (1938) which are models of systematic cataloguing and are real accomplishments in the field. Similarly O. Grabar's THE COINAGE OF THE TULUNIDS (1957) should be noted. Earlier monographs such as Stanley Lane Poole's COINS OF THE URTUKI TURKUMANS (1875) and Edward Rogers' THE COINAGE OF THE TULUNI DYNASTY issued as part 4 of the first volume of Orientalia Numismata in 1877 are available in reprinted form.

There are many history books covering the Islamic period which contain adequate maps, but for handy reference the HISTORICAL ATLAS OF THE MUSLIM PEOPLES compiled by Dr. R. Roolvink and nicely produced by Djambatan in Asterdam, serves the need well, since the excellent maps in color cover the period from the beginnings of Islam to our day. An alternate choice would be the ATLAS OF ISLAMIC HISTORY compiled by Harry W. Hazard published by Princeton University in 1951. This volume exists in an Arabic translation too. To supplement the Atlas, Guy le Strange's fascinating geographical work THE LANDS OF THE EASTERN CALIPHATE published in 1905 and re-issued in recent years by Khayat's in Beirut is very valuable for numismatists; although it pertains to the situation in the tenth century A.D.

Having chosen his particular area of study within the field, the numismatist will become familiar with the very wide range of literature on Muhammadan coinages, which is being added to

continually. The basic work to which he will refer is L. A. Mayer's BIBLIOGRAPHY OF MUSLIM NUMISMATICS (India excepted) which in its second edition published in 1954, brings the reader up to the year 1950. For later works the extremely valuable periodical issued by the American Numismatic Society, NUMISMATIC LITERATURE (the most recent issue being No. 86) is essential. Each issue contains a section on the Near East, contributed by editors living in all the mid-Eastern countries and elsewhere who are in touch with the research being done and articles written for the various foreign journals. Their abstracts are most carefully done.

A survey of the research being done in numismatics in this field may be of some value, and the student may consult with some benefit the reports embodied in the following: ISLAMIC AND SASANIAN NUMISMATICS, Retrospect and Prospect (Congres International de Numismatique) Paris, 1953, edited by Dr. G. C. Miles; and ISLAMIC NUMISMATICS: A Progress Report (Congresso Internazione di Numismatica) Roma 1961; and ORIENTAL NUMISMATICS, in Survey of Numismatic Research 1960-65 (Copenhagen, 1967).

It is quite likely that the newcomer to the field will be feeling bewildered over the tasks involved in getting to know the basic facts and outlines of history before he begins. Even so, it is necessary to review now the works which are often quoted, and in spite of the date of publication, have stood the test of time, and will have to form the source of his inspiration and work in the future.

To begin with, one should consider the MANUAL OF MUSULMAN NUMISMATICS by O. Codrington which was published as volume seven of the Asiatic Society Monographs in 1904, it has since been reissued after being a difficult book to find. Unfortunately there is a vast difference in its title and content. Although intended for the help of those who are Arabic and Persian scholars it is largely incomplete and imprecise. The sections of Honorary titles, Regal titles, and Religious legends are useful, as is the list of mint towns, which include latitudinal and longitudinal references. Also, the section on dates with tables of Hijra and Christian years is a necessity, although for these facts, W. Haig's little book, COMPARATIVE TABLES OF MUHAM-

MADAN AND CHRISTIAN DATES published in 1932 is preferable.

Inevitably the student will note that there are continual references in the books he reads to coins in the British, Paris, Berlin, Leningrad and Istanbul museum collections, mentioning the numbers used in the catalogues which were done with such meticulous care and labor, mostly towards the end of the last century. These works are naturally most important, and are, invariably the only sources for attribution of much of the material extent, and have to be cited in any monographs written later by scholars, or in auction catalogues issued in most countries.

In the formation of his small library the collector will want to have some current illustrated works to enable him to classify and identify coins he may find from time to time. He will therefore turn to Valentine's MODERN COPPER COINS OF THE MUHAMMADAN STATES OF TURKEY, PERSIA, EGYPT, AFGHANISTAN, MOROCCO, TRIPOLI, TUNIS, etc. first published in 1911 now available in reprinted form under the aegis of the original publisher Spink & Sons, and Organization of International Numismatists in this country. With this volume, Craig's manual COINS OF THE WORLD 1750-1850, and the latest edition of Yeoman's MODERN WORLD COINS 1850-1964, he will have a good base. For the specialist who turns to the intriguing subject of Ottoman coinages, there are some excellent works available, the best one being the very valuable work on the Ottoman coins which form part of the collection of the Yapi ve Kredi Bank in Istanbul. It is a catalogue, compiled and edited by Nuri Pere, a director of the Bank and a distinguished numismatist. Pere's work was published in 1968 under the title of OSMANLILARDA MADENI PARALAR. It includes an English language summary and foreword by N. M. Lowick of the British Museum, and in the 320 pages there are descriptions of 1,079 coins in all metals and 78 medals, clearly illustrated on 88 photogravure plates showing almost all the coins used by the Ottomans in 623 years. Another work worthy of mention is Cuneyt Olcer's OTTOMAN COINS MINTED DURING THE REIGN OF SULTAN MAHMUD II in which coins from all mints are listed in the most complete form yet published. Included is a twenty page English language summary. It is the

third volume in a multi-volume treatise on Turkish numismatics being published in low priced editions, by a fine numismatist who is an engineer by profession.

This short survey of the books on Oriental coins as they refer to the Near East cannot do justice to the many fine works of great scholarship in all languages which are not mentioned, but if it encourages more students, collectors and others to widen their reading list it will have served its purpose.

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# 1921 ENGLISH THREEPENCE VARIETY

At least two different punches for the numeral 2 were used to enter the date into the dies of the 1921 three pence. Shown above on the left is a three pence with what might be called a 2 of normal width. The coin on the right bears a distinctly narrower 2.

This variation has been observed by Mr. Lester D. Snell of Sonoma, California. He reports that he found several of the narrow 2 coins, all of the same die, in several hundred threepences of this date. Identification of this die can be made by the raised lump in the field to the right of the crown, and by a similar lump between the 2 and 1 in the date.

# INTRODUCING COLLECTORS TO ISLAMIC COINAGE

Probably the most frustrating part for the collector unacquainted with Islamic coinage is the lack of a ready reference point for him to identify the coinage. Collectors of Western type coinage usually have a portrait or easily readable date to start. The portrait quietly tells them which is the obverse and which side is "up." Islamic coinage developed a highly decorative calligraphic style since their religion forbade graven images.

One most likely way to introduce another collector to Islamic coinage is through the number system from which our own style of numbering has evolved. To put it simply, the collector should learn to read the Arabic numbering system viz:

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 0 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Arabic: | ١ | ٢ | ٣ | ٤ | ٥ | ٦ | ٧ | ٨ | ٩ | ٠ |

From here we are on surer ground, the main pitfall for the beginner is equating the Arabic O with our zero.

Some of the simplest and most easily obtainable coins to start with are the coins of Egypt, Yeoman Y-2, 3, and 4. The obverse of these coins display the "toughra" of the reigning sultan. The toughra is an ornamentally written form of a monogram of the sultan. It contains, in a very stylized manner, the name of the reigning sultan, the father's name, the title "khan" (lord) and the epithet "ever victorious." "Up" for the toughra is with the three tall parallel strokes to be uppermost and with the two flourishes finishing to the observer's right. Toughras are read from lower right to upper left.

On the other side of these coins is the accession date, (Anno Hegira), at the "bottom" of the coin. This date contains four Arabic numbers which are read from left to right as in our own numbering system. Except for the numbers, Arabic is written right to left as in Hebrew.

On the reverse of the coin the following legend is inscribed, "minted in Egypt" (zarbe fe MSR), the accession date of the ruler and the year of his reign in which the coin was struck (regnal year). Remember, read right to left, except for numbers.

Example


We read: zarbe (minted or struck)

fe (in)

msr (Ottoman Egypt)

At the "top" of the coin we find an Arabic numeral contained within the "be" of zarbe. In this case four ٤, which indicates this coin was struck during the fourth year of this sultan's reign. At the bottom, below the "MSR" we have already found his accession date, 1277 AH. This combined with the regnal year shows that this coin was minted in Egypt in the year 1864 A.D.

Hopefully, this short article will help the collector enjoy and understand more fully the Islamic series. Along with it comes a knowledge of an exciting and sometimes bloody history which leads into paths few of us have trod.

Bill Holberton

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The need for such a journal has existed for a long time, but has become acute with the large number of new and reprinted books appearing in the last few years.

The format of the MESSENGER is not rigid, but is gradually evolving into a well organized periodical which combines highly informative articles on coins and numismatic literature with a selection of books offered for sale by various numismatic book dealers. When you want something related to coin literature the MESSENGER is the place to look.

Articles appearing in the MESSENGER cover all facets of numismatics. There is, however, emphasis given to the approach to coin collecting and to the study of coins. In this regard a helping hand is offered by way of the descriptions of the most important books which are available on various numismatic subjects.

The first few issues of the MESSENGER only offered for sale books available from Castenholz and Sons, the publishers of the MESSENGER. It soon became apparent, however, that the stock of one bookseller, regardless of the extent, would not likely meet the needs of the numismatist who is building a library. As a result, the MESSENGER is open to other booksellers to offer their new or second-hand books. Interested advertisers are asked to write for information and rates.

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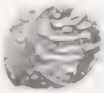

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Curto, J. J. *Sutler Issues of the Civil War.* Reprinted from the Numismatist, 1963. The sutler was one who had sole right to a concession attached to certain units of the army during the Civil War. The shortage of small change caused the sutlers to issue their own tokens and paper money to alleviate the lack of small value coins. This booklet lists the paper scrip of the sutlers. 25 pages. Illustrations in the text. Card covers. $1.00

Donlon, W. P. *United States Large Size Paper Money, 1861-1923.* Second (and latest) edition. New York, 1970. 176 pages, illustrations and valuations. Soft covers. $3.00

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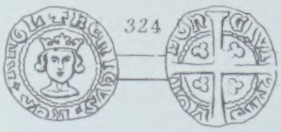

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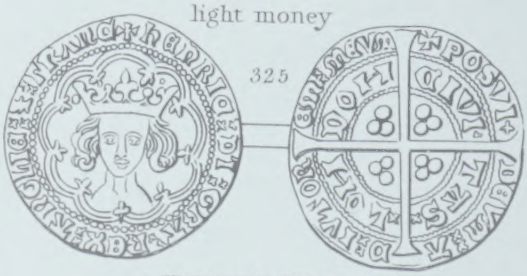

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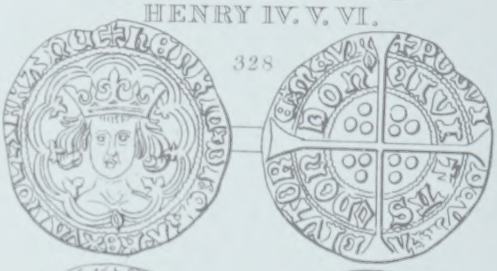

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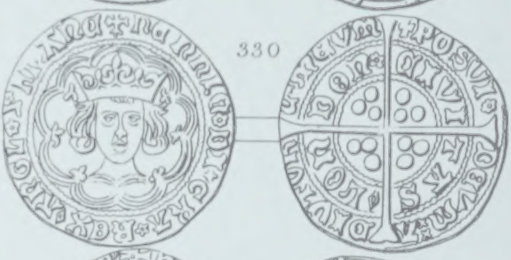

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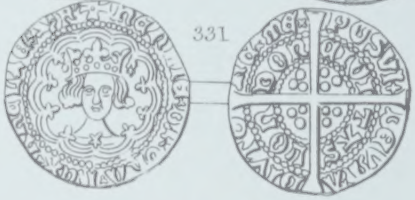

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